

FLATULENCE

Arizona Department of Corrections
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program
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What is flatulence?

Flatulence is the passage of air or "gas" from the intestines through the rectum. It is normal to have some flatulence. The average person passes gas 8 to 20 times a day. Flatulence is usually a problem only when the gas smells foul, happens frequently, or occurs at inconvenient times.

How does it occur?

Flatulence is caused by:

- Swallowing large amounts of air
- Digesting foods

You may swallow large amounts of air with your food if you eat or drink quickly. If you are sitting or standing, this air can be released through your mouth in a belch. When you lie down, the air may pass through the intestines and rectum instead.

Digesting food can also cause flatulence. Some foods are more likely to produce gas than others, and some medicines that cause constipation can make gas more frequent or painful. Gas formed by the digestive process is always passed through the rectum.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of flatulence are:

- frequent expulsion of gas through the anus.
- abdominal discomfort that is relieved by expulsion of gas.

How is it treated?

Flatulence can be treated with the following measures:

- Try to eat and drink more slowly so you swallow less air.
- Try to avoid or eat less of foods that are known to cause excessive gas.

How can I take care of myself?

Recognizing that you are swallowing air is the first step. Chew your food longer and sip fluids slowly. Try to avoid frequent sighing and chewing gum.

A change in diet often can help you with intestinal gas. Try to avoid or eat less of foods that cause flatulence. The following foods commonly produce gas in many people:

- dairy products (except yogurt)
- Some vegetables, especially beans, cauliflower, peas, onions, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, and mushrooms.
- bran and whole grains
- fruits like pears, apples, and peaches
- carbonated beverages
- dried fruits
- sugar substitutes

In addition to changing eating habits and diet, exercise (such as walking outside) may also help to ease the passing of or minimize gas. Nonprescription medicines are available in the inmate store to help reduce symptoms, such as antacids.